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## CVW-5 commander passes torch to deputy

By Journalist 2nd Class Randy Lane, Kitty Hawk public affairs



**USS KITTY HAWK, At Sea --** Capt. Michael P. McNellis assumed command of Carrier Air Wing 5 from Capt. Garry R. Mace during a flight deck ceremony aboard USS Kitty Hawk (CV 63) September 2, as the ship and air wing pulled into Laem Chabang, Thailand.

Carrier Air Wing 5 is made up of seven aircraft squadrons and two smaller aircraft detachments, consisting of about seventy aircraft and 2,000 people. The air wing and squadrons are based at Naval Air Facility Atsugi, Japan.

During the ceremony Rear Adm. Douglas McClain, commander of Carrier Strike Group 5, presented Mace with the Legion of Merit medal and talked about his importance to the strike group.

“If you want to succeed in everything you do, all you’d need to do is emulate Capt. Garry Mace,” said McClain. “He accepted the call of leadership and maintained a ‘never-lose’ attitude throughout his tour.”

In Mace’s year as air wing commander, the wing hasn’t had any major accidents. He attributed this to the teamwork between the air wing and ship.

“Teamwork has been the main theme of my time on Kitty Hawk,” said Mace. “When I’m preparing to fly and I see the plane captains, the shooters and everyone else involved with getting my plane off the deck doing their job, I feel tremendous pride to be a part of the Kitty Hawk Strike Group team.”

Mace added that McNellis’ experience will serve him well as commander.

“Since I started working with [McNellis], he’s always been a morale compass for me, keeping me pointed in the right direction,” said Mace. “I’m sure as a leader he’ll do great things for this air wing.”

McNellis said he’d do his best to continue Mace’s legacy of professionalism.

“I’ve really appreciated [Mace’s] friendship,” said McNellis. “We’re going to continue what we’ve been doing: fly aircraft, take care of our people and be ready for anything as the Navy’s only forward-deployed Carrier Air Wing.”

McNellis graduated from the U.S. Naval Academy in 1982. After earning his pilot’s wings at Naval Air Station, Pensacola, Fla., he then went to NAS Whidbey Island, Wash., for training as an EA-6B Prowler pilot.

His sea duty assignments include tours of duty as training and safety officer as part of Electronic Attack Squadron (VAQ) 140 deployed on USS John F. Kennedy and USS Dwight D. Eisenhower, as operations and maintenance officer in VAQ-137 deployed onboard USS America, and as executive and commanding officer of VAQ-132 deployed aboard USS George Washington.

An F/A-18 pilot with more than 3,000 flight hours, Mace next heads to Baghdad, Iraq, as the Commander of Joint Crew Composite Squadron One, which was set up to counter insurgent remote-controlled improvised explosive devices.

The Kitty Hawk Strike Group is the largest carrier strike group in the Navy. It includes the Kitty Hawk, air wing and squadrons, the guided-missile cruisers USS Chancellorsville (CG 62) and USS Cowpens (CG 63), and Destroyer Squadron 15 staff. The group’s ships and destroyer squadron staff are based at Fleet Activities Yokosuka, Japan.

To find more news about the Kitty Hawk Strike Group, visit the Navy NewsStand at [www.news.navy.mil/local/cv63](http://www.news.navy.mil/local/cv63).

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